the housing 904 for verifying cover placement. The optical sensor assembly 909 cooperates with a sensor-tripping structure (not shown) on the cover 906 to verify that the cover is in place. Optical sensor assembly 909 preferably includes an Optek Technology, Inc. slotted optical sensor, model number OPB980T11, available from Optek Technology, Inc. of Carrollton, Texas. The cover 906 also includes pipette openings 908 through which pipette units 480, 482 can access reagent containers within the cooling bay 900.

The housing 904 is attached to a floor plate 910, and the floor plate 910 is attached to the datum plate 82 by means of suitable mechanical fasteners extending through openings formed in mounting flanges 911 spaced about the periphery of the floor plate 910. Cooling units 912, preferably two, are attached to floor plate 910. Each cooling unit 912 comprises a thermoelectric module 914 attached cool-side-up to the bottom surface of floor plate 910. Thermoelectric modules available from Melcor, Inc. of Trenton, New Jersey, model number CP1.4-127-06L, provide the desired cooling capacity. A heat sink 916, including a plurality of heat-dissipating fins 915, is attached to, or may be integral with, the bottom surface of floor plate 910, directly below the thermoelectric module 914. A fan unit 918 is attached in a position to drain heat away from heat sink 916. Fan units 918 are preferably Orix fans, model number MD825B-24, available from Oriental Motors Ltd. of Tokyo, Japan. Together, the cooling units 912 cool the interior of the housing 904 to a prescribed temperature for the benefit of temperature-sensitive reagents (e.g., enzymes) stored within the bay 900.

Two temperature sensors (only one temperature sensor 920 is shown) are disposed within the cooling bay 900 housing 904 for monitoring and controlling the interior temperature thereof. The temperature sensors are preferably thermistors (10 KOhm at 25°C), and YSI 44036 series thermistors available from YSI, Inc. of Yellow Springs, Ohio are most preferred. YSI thermistors are preferred because of their high accuracy and the ±0.1°C interchangeability provided by YSI thermistors from one thermistor to another. One of the sensors is a primary temperature control sensor, and the other is a temperature monitoring sensor. On the basis of the temperature indications from the primary control sensor, the embedded controller adjusts power to the thermoelectric modules 914 and/or power to the fan units 918 to control cooling bay temperature. The temperature monitoring sensor provides a verification check of the primary temperature control sensor.

As shown in FIGURE 38, container tray 922 is a one-piece turntable structure with bottle-holding cavities 924 sized and shaped to receive and hold specific reagent bottles 925. A

drive system for container tray 922 includes a motor 926, a small pulley 931 on the shaft of motor 926, a belt 928, a pulley 930, and a shaft 932.
(a VEXTA stepper motor, model number PK265-02A, available from Oriental Motor Co., Ltd. of Tokyo, Japan, and an SDP timing belt, GT® Series, available from SDP/SI of New Hyde Park, New York, are preferred). Motor 926 and cooling units 912 extend through openings (not shown) formed in the datum plate 82 and extend below the floor plate 910.

Container tray 922 may include a central, upstanding handle 923 to facilitate installation of the tray 922 into and removal of the tray 922 from the housing 904. A top portion 933 of shaft 932 extends through floor plate 910 and is received by a mating aperture (not shown) formed in the bottom of the tray 922. A sensor 940 extending up through the floor plate 910 and into the housing 904 verifies that tray 922 is in place within the housing 904. Sensor 940 is preferably a capacitive proximity sensor available from Advanced Controls, Inc., of Bradenton, Florida, model number FCP2.

A position encoder 934 (preferably a slotted disk) in conjunction with an optical sensor 935 may be used to detect the position of the container tray 922, so that a specific reagent bottle 925 may be aligned under the pipette openings 908 in the cover 906.

As shown in FIGURE 37, a preferred alternative to the position encoder 934 and optical sensor 935 includes four slotted optical sensors 937 (only two sensors are visible in FIGURE 36) provided inside the housing 904 along with a flag pin (not shown) extending from the bottom of container tray 922. One sensor is provided for each quadrant of the container tray 922, and the flag trips one of the four sensors to indicate which quadrant of the container tray 922 is aligned with the pipette openings 908. Sensors 937 are preferably Optek Technology, Inc. sensors, model number OPB980T11, available from Optek Technology, Inc. of Carrollton, Texas.

A preferred alternative to the one-piece container tray 922 shown in FIGURE 38 is a modular tray 1922 shown in FIGURES 35 and 39. Tray 1922 includes a circular base plate 1926 and an upstanding handle post 1923 attached to a central portion thereof. Modular pieces 1930 having bottle-holding cavities 1924 are preferably connected to one another and to the base plate 1926 by pins 1928 and screws (not shown) to form the circular tray 1922. Other means of securing the modular pieces 1930 may be employed in the alternative to pins 1928 and screws. The modular pieces 1930 shown in the figures are quadrants of a circle, and thus, of course, four such pieces 1930 would be required to complete the tray 1922. Although quadrants are

preferred, the modular pieces may however be sectors of various sizes, such as, for example, 1/2 of a circle or 1/8 of a circle.

Alphanumeric bottle location labels 1940 are preferably provided on the base plate 1926 to identify positions within the tray 1922 for reagent containers. The preferred label scheme includes an encircled letter-number pair comprising a leading letter A, E, P, or S with a trailing number 1, 2, 3, or 4, The letters A, E, P, and S, designate amplification reagent, enzyme reagent, probe reagent, and select reagent, respectively, corresponding to the preferred mode of use of the analyzer 50, and the numbers 1-4 designate a quadrant of the tray 1922. Each modular piece 1930 includes a circular hole 1934 at the bottom of each bottle-holding cavity 1924. The holes 1934 align with the bottle location labels 1940, so that the labels 1940 can be seen when the modular pieces 1930 are in place on the base plate 1926.

The modular pieces 1930 of the container tray 1922 are configured to accommodate reagent containers of different sizes corresponding to reagent quantities sufficient for performing two hundred fifty (250) assays or reagent quantities sufficient for performing five hundred (500) assays. Four 250-assay modular quadrants permit the reagent cooling bay to be stocked for 1000 assays, and four 500-assay modular quadrants permit the reagent cooling bay to be stocked for 2000 assays. Modular quadrants for 250 or 500 assay reagent kits can be mixed and matched to configure the container tray for accommodating various numbers of a single assay type or various numbers of multiple different assay types.

An insulation pad 938 is disposed between the container tray 922 and the floor plate 910. Power, control, temperature, and position signals are provided to and from the reagent cooling bay 900 by a connector 936 and a cable (not shown) linked to the embedded controller of the analyzer 50.

A bar code scanner 941 is mounted to an upstanding scanner mounting plate 939 attached to floor plate 910 in front of an opening 942 formed in a side-wall of the cooling bay 900. The bar code scanner 941 is able to scan bar code information from each of the reagent containers carried on the container tray 922. As shown in FIGURE 39, longitudinal slots 1932 are formed along the bottle-holding cavities 1924, and bar code information disposed on the sides of the reagent container held in the bottle-holding cavities 1924 can be align with the slots 1932 to permit the bar code scanner 941 to scan the bar code information. A preferred bar code scanner is available from Microscan of Newbury Park, California under model number FTS-0710-0001.